# WIC

# SPECIAL PROJECT GRANTS

# EVALUATION TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE GUIDE


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# FOREWORD

This guide is designed to assist Supplemental Nutrition Programs for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) and Farmers' Market and Nutrition (FMNP) State programs develop evaluation plans for their WIC Special Project Grant applications. The guide provides background and tools to help State agency staff learn about evaluation, prepare for an evaluation, recruit and hire an evaluator, and develop an evaluation plan for submission to the Food and Consumer Service (FCS) as part of their WIC Special Project Grant application.

This guide was designed to supplement the *WIC Evaluation Resource Guide*, published by FCS. It was developed as a result of technical assistance activities provided to States that planned to submit WIC Special Project Grants in Fiscal Year 1996.

We hope that State agency staff find this guide useful, and we wish them much success in obtaining and completing their Special Project Grant.

KRA Corporation Staff

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Chapter 1

# What Is An Evaluation?

As a State or local WIC staff member, you frequently informally assess your program's effectiveness by addressing such questions as:

- ✓ *Are eligible women and children referred to the program?*
- ✓ *Are participants benefiting from the program?*
- ✓ *Are expected numbers of participants returning for recertification?*
- ✓ *Are participants satisfied with the quality of services?*
- ✓ *Are staffing patterns or clinic models effective for participants?*
- ✓ *Are services being coordinated with Medicaid, Maternal and Child Health, and other health care programs?*

In addition, you formally assess program activities and accomplishments as you develop your annual State plan. Each year you list your goals and objectives for improving program operations and describe your plans for operating and administering your WIC program. You support your plans, in part, using information from your monitoring activities.

> ***Evaluation*** *is a systematic method for collecting, analyzing, and using information to answer basic questions about a program.*

Program monitoring and evaluation address different levels of program assessment. Monitoring can provide information that answers questions about accountability, program operation, and efficiency. Evaluation answers similar questions by giving you a formal way of documenting program activities and effects through scientific methods. ***Evaluation is a systematic method for collecting, analyzing, and using information to answer basic questions about a program.*** It allows you to measure your progress toward your program objectives and answer research questions about your program with evidence to support these answers.

## Types of Program Evaluation and Objectives

There are many different types of program evaluations, many different terms to describe them, and many questions that they can answer. You may have heard terms for various types of evaluation, such as formative, summative, process, implementation, outcome, cost-effectiveness, and cost-benefit.

This guide presents three types of evaluations: implementation, outcome, and cost-benefit. All of the evaluation terms used in this guide directly relate to your program objectives and evaluation questions.

There are two types of program objectives—implementation objectives and outcome objectives. **Implementation objectives** refer to what you plan to do, how you plan to do it, and whom you want to reach. They include:

- ✓ *Services, training, or activities you plan to implement*
- ✓ *Characteristics of the participant population*
- ✓ *Numbers of people you plan to reach*
- ✓ *Staffing arrangements and staff training*
- ✓ *Strategies for recruiting participants*

Evaluating implementation objectives is often referred to as a process evaluation. Because there are many types of process evaluations, this guide uses the term **implementation evaluation.** *An implementation evaluation focuses on describing and examining the extent to which a project or program effort is being implemented as intended.* In conducting this type of evaluation, you may also document the facilitators and barriers to implementing your project, including strategies for overcoming these barriers.

**Outcome objectives** describe what you expect to happen as a result of your project. They could relate to what you want to accomplish within agencies, communities, or organizations as well as your objectives for individuals. Your expectations about how your project will change participants' knowledge, attitudes, behaviors, or awareness are outcome objectives. Outcome objectives may also include changes in organization or agency activities. Evaluating a program's success in attaining its expectations for change is often called an **outcome or impact evaluation.** This guide uses the first term. *An outcome evaluation is designed to assess the extent to which a project or intervention effects change.* These results are expected to be caused by project activities and tested by comparison of results across sample groups in the target population.

> ***Types of Evaluation***
>
> ***Implementation Evaluation*** *An implementation evaluation focuses on describing and examining the extent to which a program or program effort is being implemented as intended.*
>
> ***Outcome Evaluation*** *An outcome evaluation assesses the extent to which a program affects participants or agencies.*
>
> ***Cost-Benefit Study*** *A cost-benefit evaluation involves comparing the relative costs of operating a program (program expenses, staff salaries, etc.) to the benefits (gains to individuals or society) it generates.*

An evaluation can be used to determine whether you have been successful in attaining both types of objectives by answering the following questions:

- **Has the project been successful in attaining the anticipated implementation objectives?** (Are you implementing the services, training, or activities that you initially planned to implement? Are you reaching the intended target population? Are you reaching the intended number of participants? Are you developing the planned interagency relationships?)

- **Has the project been successful in attaining the anticipated outcome objectives?** (Are participants exhibiting the expected changes in knowledge, attitudes, behaviors, or awareness? Did organizational change occur?)

A comprehensive evaluation should answer **both** types of questions. You may be successful in attaining your implementation objectives, but if you do not have information about outcomes, you will not know whether your project is worthwhile. Similarly, you may be successful in changing participants' knowledge, attitudes, or behaviors; but if you do not have information about your project's implementation, you will be unable to identify the parts of your project that contribute to these changes.

A third type of evaluation is a **cost-benefit study**. *A cost-benefit evaluation involves comparing the relative costs of operating a program or project (program expenses, staff salaries, etc.) to the benefits (gains to individuals or society) it generates.* For example, a cost-benefit study of a project to increase breastfeeding rates would focus on the difference between the dollars expended for education and promotion of breastfeeding with the dollar savings from reduced use of infant formula, improved health outcomes, and the like.

You may have also heard the terms "qualitative" and "quantitative" used to describe an evaluation. However, these terms refer to the types of information or data that are collected during the evaluation and not to the type of evaluation itself.

- **Qualitative data** is information that is difficult to measure, count, or express in numerical terms. For example, participants' responses to interview questions regarding their impressions of the food delivery system are qualitative data.

- **Quantitative data** can be expressed in numerical terms, counted or compared on a scale. For example, infants' birth weights, the number of participants returning for recertification, scores on nutritional risk forms, and costs for implementing a new cereal rebate program are examples of quantitative data.

All three types of evaluations may involve the use of qualitative and quantitative data.

Your evaluation should provide you with information about your WIC Special Project Grant while it is in operation, not after it is over. This approach will allow you and your staff to identify problems and make necessary changes while the project is still operational.

## What Are the Steps for Conducting an Evaluation?

Evaluation requires a structured and consistent method of documenting your project activities. You can ensure that your evaluation is conducted in a systematic manner by following a few basic steps:

- Step 1: Assemble an evaluation team
- Step 2: Prepare for the evaluation
- Step 3: Develop an evaluation plan
- Step 4: Collect evaluation information
- Step 5: Analyze your evaluation information
- Step 6: Prepare the evaluation report

***Step 1: Assemble an evaluation team.*** Planning and executing an evaluation should be a team effort. Even when you hire an outside evaluator or consultant to help, you and members of your staff must be full partners in the evaluation effort. Chapter 3 provides guidelines for hiring and managing an evaluator.

***Step 2: Prepare for the evaluation.*** Before you begin, you will need to build a strong foundation for your evaluation. This planning phase includes deciding what to evaluate, building a program model, stating your objectives in measurable terms, and developing evaluation questions. The more attention you give to planning the evaluation, the more effective it will be. Chapter 2 will help you prepare for your evaluation.

***Step 3: Develop an evaluation plan.*** An evaluation plan is a blueprint or a map for an evaluation. It details the design and methods for conducting the evaluation and analyzing the findings. It is important to finalize your evaluation plan before beginning to implement it; this will help you avoid spending resources inefficiently. Information on what to include in a plan is provided in Chapter 4.

These steps are important to complete before you submit your WIC Special Project Grant application. Food and Consumer Service (FCS) grant reviewers look for well thought out and complete evaluation plans. Once you are awarded your grant, you will complete the remaining steps.

***Step 4: Collect evaluation information.*** With your grant project underway and a comprehensive evaluation plan, you are ready to begin collecting information. This task will require selecting or developing information collection procedures and instruments.

***Step 5: Analyze your evaluation information.*** Information analysis should be conducted at various times during the course of the evaluation to allow you and your staff to obtain ongoing feedback about the project. This feedback will either validate what you are doing or identify areas where changes may be needed.

***Step 6: Prepare the evaluation report.*** The evaluation report should be a comprehensive document that describes the project and provides the results of the information analysis. The report should also include an interpretation of the results for understanding project effectiveness.

## Cost of an Evaluation

WIC directors and staff are often concerned about the cost of an evaluation. This is an understandable concern. Evaluations do require money. Many staff believe that it is unethical to use program or agency financial resources for an evaluation, because available funds should be spent on serving participants or administering the program. However, it is more accurate to view money spent on evaluation as an investment in your program and in your participants. *Evaluation is essential if you want to know whether your program is benefiting participants or your agency.*

It is not possible to specify in this guide exactly how much money you will need to conduct your evaluation. This depends on a variety of factors, including:

- ✓ *What aspects of your program you decide to evaluate*
- ✓ *The size of the project (that is, the number of local agencies, staff members, participants, components, and services)*
- ✓ *The number of outcomes that you want to assess*
- ✓ *Who conducts the evaluation*
- ✓ *Your agency's available evaluation-related resources*
- ✓ *Economic and geographic differences*

FCS requires that all WIC Special Project Grants include an evaluation component. These grants are designed to:

- ✓ *Produce results that are sustainable without special Federal funds*
- ✓ *Produce a demonstrable impact and measurable results*
- ✓ *Build on transferable and replicable practices*
- ✓ *Include an evaluation component*
- ✓ *Produce a final report*

Given that much of the emphasis of the WIC Special Project Grants focuses on documenting and evaluating your project, you should assume that a portion of your grant must be used to demonstrate how well your project works. In other words, the WIC Special Project Grants are a type of a research and evaluation demonstration grant.

Although a dollar amount cannot be specified, it is possible to describe the kinds of information you can obtain from evaluations at different cost levels. Using an example of improving nutritional intake, some general guidelines follow.

Some programs begin their evaluation efforts with monitoring measures (such as numerical counts of participants, services, or products) and information about the characteristics of participants. Some also try to find out how satisfied participants were with the services or the training. Although useful, this information will not tell you whether you have been successful in attaining your expected outcomes. Also, you will not have in-depth information about project implementation and operations to understand whether your project was implemented as intended and, if not, what changes were made and why.

To illustrate, you may wish to improve participants' nutritional intake by providing education modules on the "importance of eating fresh fruits and vegetables" and measuring the consumption of these foods before and after the intervention, as well as assess changes in the number of WIC vouchers redeemed at farmer's markets. Using this example, you may:

- ✓ *Record the number of education modules on fresh fruit and vegetables staff conducted for individuals and in groups*
- ✓ *Record the number of participants who received this intervention*
- ✓ *Report the number of fact sheets and brochures on fruits and vegetables distributed at local clinics*

You may also know demographic characteristics of the participants who received the education modules. However, you would not know if you achieved your planned outcomes, such as increases in consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables. Nor would you have information about project implementation to understand if staff conducted the intervention as planned and, if not, what changes were made and why.

**Basic evaluation.** If you increase your evaluation budget slightly, you will be able to assess whether there has been a change in your participants' knowledge, attitudes, or behaviors or in the agency, and also collect in-depth information about your project's implementation. However, a basic evaluation does not allow you to attribute changes specifically to your project; factors outside of your project may be related to changes in the outcomes you are measuring.

> ***Example:*** Using evaluation funds may allow you to assess changes in participants' knowledge or attitudes about eating and preparing fresh foods and vegetables, as well as determine changes in food consumption and document project implementation efforts. Without spending more money on evaluation, however, you would not be able to attribute the changes in food consumption to your educational efforts.

**Enhanced evaluation.** Adding more money to your evaluation budget will allow you to use a comparison or control group, and therefore be able to attribute any changes in participants or the agency to the intervention itself. At this cost level, however, your information on outcomes may be limited to short-term changes—those that occurred during or immediately after the project.

*Example:* By investing a moderate portion of your grant funds in an evaluation, you may have a comparison or control group by which to determine if more changes in food consumption occurred among participants receiving the new education module than those who did not receive this intervention.

**Rigorous evaluation.** By devoting a greater portion of your project funds to an evaluation, you will be able to obtain all of the information available from the other options as well as longer term outcome information on project participants. The higher cost of this type of evaluation is due to the necessity of tracking or contacting program participants after they have left the program. Although followup activities often are expensive, longer term outcome information is important because it assesses whether the changes in knowledge, attitudes, or behaviors that your participants experienced initially are maintained after they leave the WIC program.

*Example:* This level of evaluation would allow you to determine the long-term effects of your intervention. You could determine, for example, that pregnant and postpartum women increased their consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables and maintained this change in eating habits over time as well as learning that they provided their children appropriate amounts of these foods.

Basically, as you increase your budget for an evaluation, you gain a corresponding increase in knowledge about your success in attaining your project objectives. In many situations, the lowest cost evaluations may not be worth the expense, and, to be realistic, the highest cost evaluations may not be feasible given your project and the WIC Special Grant Project funding period. At a minimum, FCS requires WIC Special Project Grant recipients to conduct basic evaluation. As a general rule, the more money you are willing to invest in an evaluation, the more useful the information that you will obtain about your project's effectiveness will be, and the more useful these results will be in helping you advocate for your program.■

## Chapter 2
# How Do You Prepare for an Evaluation?

The effectiveness of an evaluation ultimately depends on how well you have planned it. Begin planning and preparing for the evaluation when you are designing your project for your grant application. This approach will ensure that the evaluation reflects the project's goals and objectives. The process of preparing for one should involve all staff who are to be part of the evaluation team, and anyone else who will be involved with your project effort.

There are five basic steps in preparing for your evaluation. Each step is designed to help you build a strong foundation.

- Step 1: Decide what to evaluate
- Step 2: Build a model of your project
- Step 3: State your objectives in measurable terms
- Step 4: Develop evaluation questions
- Step 5: Identify the context for your evaluation

***Step 1: Decide what to evaluate.*** Programs vary in size and scope. Your special project may have multiple components, or it may only have only one or two. You can evaluate your entire grant project, one or two project components (e.g., voucher distribution and nutrition education), or even one or two services or activities within a component (e.g., individual nutrition education). To a large extent, your decision about what to evaluate will depend on what aspects of your special project grant are "new," what you want to learn, and your program design. It is better to conduct an effective evaluation of a single project component than to attempt an evaluation of several components or an entire project that is not well designed or lacks sufficient resources.

If your program is already operational (i.e., your special project grant is to evaluate what you are already doing), you may decide you only want to evaluate a particular service or component—or, you may want to evaluate your entire program. The steps described in this chapter will help you determine how much of your project you should evaluate.

***Step 2: Build a model of your project.*** Whether you decide to evaluate your entire project, a single component, or a single intervention, you will need to build a model that clearly describes what you plan to do. A model will provide a structural framework for your evaluation. Also, the model will help you determine whether your proposed project is of a size and scope that is "workable" within the grant period and budget.

There are a variety of types of models. In general, the model suggested below represents a series of logically related assumptions about the project or the participants you serve and the changes you hope to bring about in the program or participants as a result of your project. It also builds on the project's objectives. Two sample completed program models and a worksheet that can be used to develop a model for your project appear at the end of this chapter. The program model includes the following features:

- ✓ *Assumptions about why you are conducting the project*
- ✓ *Program interventions*
- ✓ *Immediate outcomes*
- ✓ *Intermediate outcomes*
- ✓ *Anticipated program impact*
- ✓ *Goals*

**Assumptions about why you are conducting this project effort.** Your assumptions about your target population, your project, or the intervention you have planned form the basis for why you decided to develop your project, implement a service, or obtain a special project grant. These assumptions may be based on theory, your own experiences working in the WIC program, or your review of existing research or program literature.

Using the worksheet, write your assumptions in column 1. Some examples of assumptions that could underlie development of a special project include the following:

- ✧ ***Assumption:*** *Breastfeeding promotion and support activities are costly to implement, but require little operational costs to continue once implemented.*

- ✧ ***Assumption:*** *Women receiving WIC at integrated clinic settings are more likely to receive coordinated services from Medicaid, Maternal and Child Health Services, and/or substance abuse services.*

- ✧ ***Assumption:*** *A cereal rebate program will allow WIC to serve a larger proportion of eligible women than the State currently serves.*

- ✧ ***Assumption:*** *Computerized nutrition education modules will free up clinic staff time and improve clinic efficiency.*

- ✧ ***Assumption:*** *Paraprofessional peer counselors in inner-city WIC clinic settings increase participants' compliance with voucher pickup and recertification schedules.*

**Program interventions.** The program's interventions represent what you plan to do to respond to the problems identified in your assumptions. They include the specific services, activities, or products you plan to develop or implement as part of your special project. Using the worksheet, you can fill in your program interventions in column 2. Some examples of interventions that correspond to the above assumptions include the following:

☆ *Measure the costs of breastfeeding promotion and support activities.*

☆ *Document and examine the number and type of services received by WIC recipients.*

☆ *Work with cereal manufacturers to set a negotiated rebate price for cereal.*

☆ *Provide computerized nutrition education sessions in clinic waiting areas.*

☆ *Provide paraprofessional peer counselors in selected WIC clinics to assist inner-city participants.*

**Immediate outcomes.** Immediate outcomes are your expectations about the changes in participants' knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors or other immediate changes that you expect to result from your intervention(s). They occur within a short time period (typically a few months to a year, depending on your project effort). They can be entered in column 3 of the worksheet. Examples of immediate outcomes linked to the above interventions include the following:

★ *Discrete staff activities and the sequence of activities associated with breastfeeding promotion and support are identified.*

★ *The types of services WIC participants receive are determined.*

★ *Bid system to select manufacturer is developed and potential cereal manufacturers willing to bid are targeted.*

★ *Nutrition education topics best suited to computerized interactions are identified.*

★ *Activities for paraprofessional peer counselors are specified and supervisory staff are identified.*

**Intermediate outcomes.** Intermediate outcomes, entered in column 4, represent the changes in participants or your program that you expect will follow after immediate outcomes are achieved. Examples of intermediate outcomes include the following:

★★ *After a sequence of discrete activities associated with breastfeeding promotion and support are identified, **the cost of these activities are determined.***

☆☆ *After the types of services WIC participants receive are determined,* ***the number of specified services each participant receives are measured.***

☆☆ *After the bid system to select a cereal manufacturer is developed and potential cereal manufacturers willing to bid targeted,* ***cereal manufacturers respond to the Statewide bid solicitation.***

☆☆ *After nutrition education topics best suited to computerized interactions are identified,* ***interactive nutrition education modules are developed.***

☆☆ *After activities for paraprofessional peer counselors are specified and supervisory staff identified,* ***paraprofessional peer counselors are recruited.***

**Anticipated program impact.** The anticipated program impact, specified in the column 5 of the model, represents your expectations about the long-term effects of your program on participants, your agency, or the community. They are derived logically from your immediate and intermediate outcomes. Examples of anticipated program impacts include the following:

★ *After the costs associated with breastfeeding promotion and support are measured,* ***incremental costs of expanding the program are determined.***

★ *After the number and type of services WIC participants receive are determined,* ***the type of clinic associated with access to more services is known.***

★ *After a cereal producer is selected,* ***the cost of the food package decreases and the number of WIC participants who can be served increases.***

★ *After paraprofessionals are added to the WIC clinic staff,* ***WIC participants comply with voucher pickup and recertification schedules.***

**Goals.** Because of the time limitation of the WIC Special Project Grants, you may not be able to achieve your ultimate program goal. It is helpful to list your goals in your model so you can determine whether each of the activities or interventions you plan to undertake help you achieve your goal. The goals are listed in the last (far right) column in the model.

Once you list everything in the columns, you may want to link the items across, using arrows, to establish the relationships between an assumption, activity (or activities), outcomes, a program impact, and goal. You may find that several assumptions relate to one activity, that one project activity results in multiple outcomes, or that multiple outcomes contribute to achieving your goal. A sample model with arrows is shown at the end of the chapter.

***Step 3: State your objectives in measurable terms.*** The program model serves as a basis for identifying your project's objectives. The program interventions suggest the areas for which you should develop implementation objectives while the outcomes and program impact suggest possible outcome objectives. At a minimum, you should focus your evaluation on assessing whether your objectives were attained.

*__Goals__ are broad statements about an ideal state that your program would like to achieve. Typically, goals are not stated in measurable terms. For example, one goal is to improve vendor compliance. Your __objectives__ would be more specific (i.e., measurable) detailing how you plan to achieve your goal. Objectives state the "when, who, and how" for meeting your goal.*

Again, every project, component, or service can be characterized by two types of objectives—implementation objectives and outcome objectives. Implementation objectives describe the project, such as what will be done, who will do it, and so forth. Outcome objectives are measures of the changes that you expect will occur as a result of your project. Both types of objectives need to be stated in measurable terms.

Often program managers and directors believe that stating objectives in measurable terms means that they have to establish performance standards or some kind of arbitrary "measure" that the program must attain. ***This is not correct.*** Stating objectives in measurable terms simply means that you state your objectives in such a way that you can measure achievement of these objectives. Measurable means that you define "how many, when, for how long, what type, and how much" in your objectives. From this perspective, measurement can involve anything from counting the number of nutrition education sessions to using a standardized test that will result in a quantifiable score. Some examples of stating objectives in measurable terms are provided below.

**Stating implementation objectives in measurable terms.** Examples of implementation objectives include the following:

> ***What you plan to do***—The services/activities you plan to provide (undertake) or the products you plan to develop, and the duration and intensity of the services or activities.
>
> ***Who will do it***—What the staffing arrangements will be; the characteristics and qualifications of the program staff who will deliver the services, conduct the activities, or develop the products; and how these individuals will be recruited and hired.
>
> ***Whom you plan to reach and how many***—A description of the targeted participants (such as 4-year olds and their caretakers) or the number of participants to be reached during a specific time frame, and how you plan to select the participants for the project.
>
> ***How long***—Depending on what you plan to do as part of your WIC Special Project, you may find it useful to develop objectives that specify how long you plan to conduct a project activity. This type of objective is particularly important when your project is planned around sequential activities.

These objectives are not difficult to state in measurable terms. You simply need to be specific about your project's operations. The following example demonstrates how general implementation objectives can be transformed into measurable objectives.

***General objective: Provide breastfeeding peer counseling support to first-time mothers.***

***Measurable objectives:***

> ***What you plan to do***—Provide biweekly peer counseling support to mothers in their last 6 weeks of pregnancy through 6 months after birth, with each peer counseling session lasting 15 minutes per mother.
>
> ***Who will do it***—Breastfeeding peer counseling sessions will be conducted by two peer counselors. One will be a Hispanic mother in her 20s who breastfed her first child, and the other will be a non-Hispanic mother of a similar age who breastfed her first child.
>
> Peer counselors will be given 4 hours of training. Training will be conducted by the nutritionist and a lactation consultant.
>
> Peer counselors will be recruited from recent WIC participants and will be supervised by the nutritionist who will provide 2 hours of supervision each week.
>
> ***Who you plan to reach and how many***—All pregnant women in integrated WIC clinics (N=5,000) in their third trimester of pregnancy will be targeted for the peer counseling program.

A blank worksheet that can be used to state your implementation objectives in measurable terms is provided at the end of this chapter. From your description of the specific characteristics for each objective, the evaluation will be able to assess, on an ongoing basis, whether the objectives were attained, the types of problems encountered during program implementation, and the areas where changes may need to be made. For example, using the example provided above, you may discover that biweekly peer counseling sessions are too infrequent after birth to sustain breastfeeding. You will then need to determine the needed frequency of peer counseling sessions, asking the following questions:

> *How many women met with their peer counselor on a biweekly basis? What characteristics distinguish these women from those who did not meet with their peer counselors biweekly?*
>
> *How many women began breastfeeding at birth and then stopped? At what point did they stop? Why did they stop breastfeeding?*
>
> *What barriers were encountered to participation in the biweekly peer counseling sessions (such as reluctance to attend, lack of transportation, or lack of interest)?*

Based on your answers to these questions, you may decide to increase the frequency of peer counseling sessions, increase the number of peer counselors, provide further training to peer counselors, or offer peer counseling at a site more convenient to participants.

**Stating outcome objectives in measurable terms.** This process requires you to be specific about the changes in knowledge, attitudes, awareness, or behavior of participants or organizational changes that you expect to occur as a result of your project. One way to be specific about these changes is to ask yourself the following question:

*How will we know that the expected changes occurred?*

To answer this question, you will have to identify the evidence needed to demonstrate that your participants have changed or the organization changed. The following examples demonstrate how outcome objectives may be stated in measurable terms. A worksheet for defining measurable outcome objectives appears at the end of this chapter.

***Outcome objectives:***

***General objective: We expect to increase breastfeeding among WIC participants.***
***Measurable objective:*** *First-time mothers participating in WIC will demonstrate significant increases in their breastfeeding behavior, such as the number who breastfeed after delivery, the number still breastfeeding at 6 weeks, and the number who continue to breastfeed at 12 weeks.*

***General objective: We expect to improve clinic operations, including participant wait times and voucher distribution, based on the information learned from the Patient Flow Analysis.***
***Measurable objective:*** *Clinic wait times will significantly decrease. Staff time spent distributing vouchers will significantly decrease, participant wait times for vouchers will significantly decrease, and errors associated with voucher distribution will decrease by 15 percent.*

***General objective: We expect to improve vendor compliance with WIC program requirements.***
***Measurable objective:*** *Vendor staff (cashiers) will demonstrate significant increases in their scores on instruments that measure knowledge of the WIC program and compliance issues from before to after individualized computer-based training.*

***General objective: We expect to decrease vendor sanctions and increase compliance upon implementation of a WIC electronic benefit transfer system.***
***Measurable objective:*** *Vendors will demonstrate significant increases in the specified type and brand of food sold, and a significant decrease in the number of foods sold at more than the current price charged to other customers.*

***Step 4: Develop evaluation questions.*** Developing your evaluation questions is an important part of planning your evaluation. Your questions, along with your objectives, identify what it is you plan to study as part of your evaluation. You can develop evaluation questions directly from your objectives, or develop questions to augment your objectives.

In considering what questions you want answered as part of your evaluation, keep in mind:

- ✓ *What you want to learn from your evaluation effort*
- ✓ *What it is you need to demonstrate to FCS (program success, cost savings, etc.) about your project*
- ✓ *What you can realistically answer in the time period you have for evaluation and with the resources you have available for evaluation purposes*
- ✓ *What is most important to learn from your WIC Special Project*

These guidelines will help you develop and prioritize the evaluation questions you want answered.

Some staff find it is helpful to brainstorm questions, listing out any and all that come to mind. Others use their objectives as a basis for generating questions, adding a few questions when certain aspects of the project are not included as part of their objectives. Either method is effective. Once you have identified your evaluation questions, you can use them (or your objectives) to frame your evaluation plan.

***Step 5: Identify the context for your evaluation.*** Part of planning for an evaluation requires understanding the context in which the evaluation and project will take place. Think about your agency, agency staff, and your participants. Consider how they might affect your project and evaluation.

**The agency context.** The characteristics of an agency affects both the operation of a project and the evaluation. The aspects of your agency that need to be considered in preparing for your evaluation of your WIC Special Project include the following:

> ***Evaluation-related resources.*** Does your agency have a management information system in place that can be used to collect data on participants and services? Does your agency have access to staff who have experience evaluating WIC and other related programs?
>
> ***History conducting program evaluations.*** Has your agency participated in an evaluation before? If yes, was the experience a negative or positive one? If not, what were the problems and how can they be avoided in the current evaluation?
>
> ***Proposed grant project's relationship to other agency activities.*** Is the project you plan to evaluate integrated into other agency activities, or will it function as a separate entity? What are the relationships between the special project effort and other agency activities? If the project will be integrated, how will you evaluate it apart from other agency activities? Are there any pending agency reorganizations? How and to what extent will this affect your WIC Special Project?
>
> ***Involvement of other divisions or organizations in the WIC Special Project.*** Many agencies use the special project grant as an opportunity to pursue a collaborative endeavor

with another organization, university, or division within your agency. If you plan to involve other entities in your WIC Special Project, you will have additional issues to consider. Does your agency have an established relationship with the division or entity with which you will be working on the WIC Special Project? Is any portion of the funds from the WIC Special Project going to this other organization? What levels of staff at the other organization support the project? Is there support for the WIC Special Project at the worker and administrative levels? Is the organization flexible enough to meet the grant requirements, including staffing, time table, and others?

Agency issues can complicate your evaluation and may impact the success of your project. These issues become important when analyzing the results of your project.

**The staff context.** The support and full participation of program staff in an evaluation is critical to its success. Sometimes evaluations are not successfully implemented because program staff who are responsible for data collection do not consistently administer or complete evaluation forms or follow the directions of the evaluation team. The usual reason for staff-related evaluation problems is that staff were not adequately prepared for the evaluation or given the opportunity to participate in its planning and development. Contextual issues relevant to program staff include the following:

***Experiences participating in program evaluations.*** Have your staff (including clinic personnel) participated in evaluations prior to this one? If yes, was the experience a positive or negative one? How much do they know about the evaluation process and how much training will they need to participate as full partners in the evaluation?

If staff have had negative experiences with evaluation, work with them to emphasize the positive aspects of evaluation and to demonstrate how this evaluation will be different from prior ones. All staff will need careful training if they are to be involved in any evaluation activities, and this training should be reinforced throughout the duration of the evaluation.

***Attitudes toward evaluation.*** Do your staff have positive or negative attitudes toward evaluation? If negative, what can be done to make them more positive? How can they be encouraged to support and participate fully in the evaluation?

Negative attitudes sometimes can be counteracted when program managers or directors demonstrate enthusiasm for the evaluation and when evaluation activities are integrated with program activities. It may be helpful to demonstrate to staff how evaluation instruments can be used to learn about the program or give examples of the type of information staff will be provided as a result of their efforts. Involving staff in the design of questionnaires also proves effective in involving them in the evaluation.

**The participant population context.** Before designing an evaluation, it is very important to understand the characteristics of your participant population—particularly, the potential diversity of your WIC population. For example, is the WIC population similar or diverse with respect to age, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and literacy levels? If the population is diverse, how can the evaluation address this diversity?

> ***Culture** refers to the shared values, traditions, norms, customs, arts, history, institutions, and experiences of a group of people. The group may be identified by race, age, ethnicity, language, national origin, religion, or other social category or grouping.*

Participant diversity can present a significant challenge to an evaluation effort. Instruments and methods that may be appropriate for some participants may not be for others. For example, written questionnaires may be easily completed by some WIC participants, but others may not have adequate literacy levels. Similarly, face-to-face interviews may be appropriate for some of the cultural groups WIC serves, but not for others.

If you serve a diverse population of participants, you may need to be flexible in your data collection methods. You may design an instrument, for example, that can be administered either as a written questionnaire or as an interview instrument. You also may need to have your instruments translated into different languages. However, it is important to remember that just translating an instrument does not necessarily mean that it will be culturally appropriate. If you are concerned about the literacy levels of your population, you will need to pilot test your questionnaires to make sure that participants understand what is being asked of them before you begin collecting data.

If you serve a particular cultural group, you may need to select the individuals who are to collect the evaluation information from the same cultural or ethnic group as your participants.

After you have completed these initial steps, it is time to develop your evaluation plan. This plan outlines the specific activities for conducting the evaluation of your WIC Special Project.■

# Program Model Worksheet

| Assumptions | Interventions | Immediate Outcomes | Intermediate Outcomes | Program Impact | Goals |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | |
| | | | | | |
| | | | | | |
| | | | | | |

## Sample Program Model Worksheet

| Assumptions | Interventions | Immediate Outcomes | Intermediate Outcomes | Program Impact | Goals |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| - Integrated services would be successful if all relevant services were in the same building | - open "one-stop shopping" facilties for WIC recepients | - determine possible locations where WIC services, Medicaid, and MCHS, and other services can be housed in one building | - open integrated facilities | - WIC recipients receive all benefits and services for which they are eligible | -integrate WIC with other programs |
| - Social service agencies need to be on the same automated system to allow for integration of services | - provide integrated, single computer system to make integration of services easier | - determine the various software that each service/program uses; find a common system for all computers | - install software and network capabilities to coordinate services and integrate client information system into one form | - better trained and integrated staff in the respective agencies | |
| - "Front-line" workers are unfamilar with integrated services and need training in how to coordinate services from various perspectives | - provide training for various social service staff to work together | - develop training modules | - conduct training sessions for employees | | |

## Sample Program Model Worksheet

| Assumptions | | Interventions | | Immediate Outcomes | | Intermediate Outcomes | | Program Impact |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Women receiving WIC at integrated clinic settings are more likely to receive coordinated services from Medicaid, Maternal and Child Health Services, and/or substance abuse services | ⇨ | -open "one-stop shopping" locations for WIC recipients | ⇨ | -identify locations where WIC services, Medicaid, and MCHS, and other social services can be housed in one building | ⇨ | -open integrated facilities | ⇨ | -increased number of service benefits accrue to WIC participants |
| | ⇨ | -coordinate WIC with social service agency staff in order to allow for integration of services | ⇨ | | | | ⇨ | -increased referrals and certification for all programs that are integrated with WIC |
| | | | ⇨ | -develop cross-training workshops | ⇨ | -conduct training sessions for employees | ⇨ | -better trained and integrated staff in respective agencies |

## Implementation Objectives Worksheet

| Service or Activity | What you will do | Who will do it | Who you will reach and how many | How long |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |

# Outcome Objectives Worksheet

| Service or Activity | Target of Change (Service, Activity or Participants) | General Expected Outcomes | Measurable Outcomes |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |

## Chapter 3
# How Do You Select and Manage An Outside Evaluator?

Finding an appropriate evaluator for your project is an early essential step to a successful evaluation. You will need to identify an evaluator who can assist in the development of an evaluation plan. Some WIC agencies have experience working with evaluators and you may decide to turn to these individuals as you begin the process of designing a project and planning an evaluation. You may choose to work with consultants who can offer their expertise in evaluation and write part of the grant proposal. Whether or not there are funds to pay such consultants at the grant application writing stage, you will need to identify evaluators to help develop the evaluation plan, and later, to conduct the project evaluation. A common practice is to identify an evaluator, work with the evaluator in developing the project and evaluation plan, and then, upon grant award, officially hire the evaluator to conduct the evaluation.

This chapter provides advice on how to locate, select, hire, and manage an outside evaluator. Even if your agency has experience working with particular evaluators, the following information will be useful in assessing whether the evaluator is ideal for your project and in managing an evaluation effort.

## Finding and Selecting an Evaluator

Careful selection of an outside evaluator can mean the difference between a positive and a negative experience. If you build a good relationship with your evaluator, you can work together to ensure that the evaluation plan is on track and, later, that the evaluation proceeds as expected and provides the information you and FCS want.

There are four basic steps for finding an evaluator:

- Step 1: Develop a job description or statement of work for a Request for Proposal (RFP)
- Step 2: Locate sources for evaluators
- Step 3: Solicit applications
- Step 4: Review applications and interview potential candidates

These steps are similar to any you would use to recruit and hire new program staff. As a public agency, you may need to refer to your agency or State's procedures and regulations for hiring outside consultants or contractors.

***Step 1: Develop a job description or statement of work for an RFP.*** The first step in the hiring process is to develop a job description or statement of work that details the general and specific requirements of the evaluator. The general requirements should include:

- ✓ *Materials, services, and products to be provided by the evaluator*
- ✓ *Time lines involved*

The job description should include the evaluator responsibilities once the project is funded, such as developing data collection instruments and forms, collecting and analyzing data, and writing reports. List the frequency with which you expect to meet with the evaluator and requirements for submitting written reports.

The specific requirements should outline the individual tasks that should be performed by the evaluator. For example, the statement of work may include such tasks to be completed by the evaluator as:

- ✓ *Attending preliminary meetings*
- ✓ *Refining the evaluation plan*
- ✓ *Developing the research design, data collection plan, and sampling plan,*
- ✓ *Conducting data collection activities and data analysis*
- ✓ *Writing preliminary and final reports*

In addition, each task should have an associated time frame for beginning and completion. Similarly, each task should have specific due dates for submission of documents related to the completion of the task.

If you think you need assistance in developing a job description, ask another agency that has experience in hiring outside evaluators for help. As you prepare a job description or statement of work, you will need to ensure that you are following your agency's, State's, or tribal council's procurement procedures for hiring a consultant or contractor, including developing an RFP.

Should you work with a known evaluator in this effort, the process may be more informal. Regardless, it is always wise to be specific about your needs through a contract.

***Step 2: Locate sources for evaluators.*** Potential sources useful for finding an evaluator include the following:

- **State and local WIC agency staff or other community agencies that have used outside evaluators.** Some WIC agencies have conducted evaluations, including evaluations of special projects. Other similar agencies, such as the health department, are a good source of information about potential outside evaluators. Colleagues from these agencies may be able to recommend a good evaluator, suggest methods of advertising, and provide other useful information. This is one of the best ways to find an evaluator who understands your program and is sensitive to your agency and the participants you serve.

- **Evaluation divisions of State agencies.** Most State government agencies have planning and evaluation departments. You may be able to use individuals from these departments to work with you on your evaluation. Some evaluation divisions are able to offer their services at no cost as an "in-kind" service. If they are unable to respond to an RFP or provide you with in-kind services, staff members from these divisions may be able to direct you toward other organizations that are interested in conducting outside evaluations.

- **Local colleges and universities.** Departments of sociology, psychology, social work/social welfare, education, public health, nutrition, and public administration, and university-based research centers are possible sources within colleges and universities. Researchers and graduate students affiliated with these institutions may be readily identifiable. If they cannot personally assist you, they may be able to refer you to other individuals interested in performing local program evaluations.

- **Research institutes and consulting firms.** Many experienced evaluators are part of research institutes and consulting firms. They are sometimes listed in the yellow pages under "Research" or "Marketing Research." They also can be located by contacting procurement offices of similar agencies to get a listing of the firms that have bid on recent contracts for evaluations of State programs.

- **The American Evaluation Association.** Many evaluators belong to the American Evaluation Association. Based at the Virginia Department of Education in Richmond, Virginia, this organization can provide a list of members in your area for a fee. They may also be able to assist you with advice on how you should advertise to attract an evaluator who best meets your needs.

- **The American Sociological Association.** State and local chapters of the American Sociological Association may be able to direct you to members who conduct local program evaluations. Departments of sociology at local colleges and universities should be able to provide you with the State chapter's telephone number.

- **Other professional associations and national organizations.** Agencies such as the American Public Welfare Association and The United Way have staff and board members who may be able to provide you with names of evaluators. They may also be able to offer insight on evaluations that were done well or evaluators especially suited to your needs.

- **FCS.** Contacts at FCS can provide information on evaluation studies conducted by contractors. The Office of Analysis and Evaluation can provide a list of contractors who have conducted evaluation studies for them in the past.

- **The public library.** Reference librarians may be able to direct you to new sources. They can help identify local research firms and may be able to provide you with conference proceedings that list program evaluators who were presenters.

***Step 3: Solicit applications.*** After you have developed a job description or formal statement of work and identified possible sources for evaluators, you are ready to solicit applications. Advertising in the local paper, posting the position at a local college or university, or working with your agency's human resource department are possible ways of soliciting candidates. Agency newsletters, local and national meetings, and professional journals are additional sources where you can post your advertisement. It is wise to advertise as widely as possible, particularly if you are in a small community or are undertaking an evaluation for the first time. Placing an ad in several sources will ensure that you receive multiple responses. Build in as much time as possible between when you post the position and when you plan to review applications.

***Elements of an Effective Advertisement***

✓ *Your agency's name, address, and telephone number, and a contact person (optional, but if you include one, this person should be ready to handle inquiries)*

✓ *Brief description of project, including objectives, types of evaluation anticipated, available budget, and period of performance (for both the project and evaluation)*

✓ *Principal tasks of the evaluator*

✓ *Required evidence of expertise (such as letters of introduction, a resume, a list of references, or a description of a recent evaluation)*

✓ *Whether an interview is required (strongly recommended for candidates under consideration)*

✓ *Other requirements (such as whether you will accept a faxed application) and the deadline for a response to the advertisement*

If you have sufficient time, you may want to consider a two-step process for applications. The position would still be advertised, but you would send the top one or two evaluators who respond to your advertisement more detailed information about your evaluation requirements and request a description of their approach. For example, you could send potential evaluators a brief description of the project and the evaluation questions you want to answer, along with a description of the community you serve. This would give them an opportunity to propose a plan that more closely corresponds to your project needs.

***Step 4: Review applications and interview potential candidates.*** The final step in finding an evaluator is to review the proposals submitted and select one. In reviewing applications, consider the candidate's writing style, type of evaluation plan proposed, language (jargon free), experience working with nutrition programs and staff, familiarity with the subject area of your project, experience conducting similar evaluations, and proposed costs.

After you have narrowed your selection to two or three candidates, you are ready to schedule an in-person interview. This interview will give you the opportunity to determine whether you and the evaluator are compatible. As you do for other job applicants, you will need to check references from other programs that worked with your candidate.

Before selecting an evaluator to assist you in the development of the evaluation plan, and subsequent project evaluation, you will want to know, at a minimum, the following information:

- What level of experience does the evaluator have in the area of program evaluation?
- Does the evaluator have any experience conducing evaluations for WIC or similar types of programs?
- Can the evaluator offer assistance in the full range of program evaluation activities, including research design, data collection, data analysis, data interpretation, dissemination, and use of the results?
- Will the information be presented in a way that will be useful to you and used by you?
- What are the size and scope (large or small) of evaluations performed by the evaluator in the past?
- How will other State and local WIC staff be involved in the evaluation?
- Is the evaluator willing to work closely with you and other involved parties?

When considering an evaluator who is not local, you need to balance the issues of cost, availability, familiarity with your program, and commitment. Although distance from the program is sometimes a barrier, many agencies have successfully worked with out-of-town evaluators.

Obviously, you will need to follow whatever procedures your agency has in place for working with consultants during a grant application process and when contracting out for services. Be sure to obtain appropriate approvals before notifying your evaluator of your selection.

***A good evaluator...***

*... is willing to work collaboratively to develop an evaluation plan that meets your needs*

*... is able to communicate in simple, practical terms*

*... has experience evaluating WIC or similar programs and working with similar resource levels*

*... has experience with statistical methods*

*... has the time available to do the evaluation*

*... has experience developing data collection forms or using standardized instruments*

*... will collect and record data accurately and in a timely manner*

*... will treat data confidentially*

*... can come from outside the participant community because the evaluator will be able to learn about, respect, and work with your participants and their multiple cultures*

*... is located near your project's operations or is willing to travel frequently to maintain contact with the project (although travel expenses will increase the cost of your evaluation)*

## Managing an Evaluator

Often staff believe that when their agency hires an outside evaluator the evaluation is "out of their hands." **This is not true.** An outside evaluator cannot do the job effectively without the cooperation and assistance of program managers, WIC directors, and staff. This is true during the evaluation plan development phase and in the implementation of the plan.

An evaluation is like any activity taking place within your agency—it needs to be managed. What would happen if your staff stopped recertifying children over 1 year of age? How long would it be before you knew this had happened? How long would it be before you took action? How involved would you be in finding a solution? An evaluation needs to be treated with the same level of priority.

Listings of the potential responsibilities of evaluators and program managers appear at the end of the chapter.

**Creating a Contract.** A major step in managing an evaluation is the development of a contract with your evaluator. Your contract is a legally binding document that specifies the evaluation activities to be performed, the amount of time to complete the evaluation, and the cost. This document offers you protections by specifying who is expected to conduct the work and how the data that has been collected will be used. The contract should also specify who "owns" the evaluation data and your expectations about contacts between the evaluator and various WIC staff.

- **Who will perform evaluation tasks.** The contract should clarify who is to perform the evaluation tasks. Some program managers have found that outside evaluators, after they are hired, delegate many of their responsibilities to less experienced staff and have little contact with the program managers or staff. To some extent, a contract can protect your program from this type of situation. It should specify what percentage of time the evaluator and his or her staff will devote to the evaluation.

- **Who owns the evaluation information.** It is important to specify who has ownership and to whom the information can be given. Release of information to outside parties should always be cleared with appropriate agency staff. Any plans for publishing the evaluation results should be discussed and cleared before articles are written and submitted for publication. At a minimum, publication should not occur until you have completed your WIC Special Project Grant and submitted your final report to FCS.

- **Contact between the evaluator and program staff.** It is very important for an outside evaluator to keep program staff informed about the status of the evaluation and to integrate the evaluation into ongoing program operations. Failure to do this shortchanges program staff and denies the program an opportunity to make important changes on an ongoing basis. The contract could specify attendance at staff meetings and ongoing reporting requirements. Setting up regular meetings, inviting evaluators to program events and staff meetings, and requiring periodic reports may help solidify the relationship between the program and the evaluation.

An exhibit presenting basic elements of a contract appears at the end of the chapter; however, it is essential to refer to agency, State, or tribal council procurement procedures in developing a contract. ■

***Potential Responsibilities of the Evaluator***

- ✓ *Develop an evaluation plan, in conjunction with program staff*
- ✓ *Provide monthly or quarterly progress reports to staff (written or in person)*
- ✓ *Train project staff. Training topics could include:*

  *Using evaluation instruments, information collection activities, participant/case selection for sampling purposes, and other activities*

  *Designing information collection instruments or selecting standardized instruments or inventories*

- ✓ *Implement information collection procedures such as:*

  *Interview project staff*
  *Interview coordinating agency staff*
  *Interview program participants*
  *Conduct focus groups*
  *Observe project activities*
  *Review participant case records*
  *Develop data base*
  *Code, enter, and clean data*
  *Analyze data*

- ✓ *Establish and oversee procedures ensuring confidentiality during all phases of the evaluation*
- ✓ *Write interim (quarterly, biannual, yearly) evaluation reports and the final evaluation report*
- ✓ *Attend project staff meetings and interagency meetings with other agencies or parties involved in the project*
- ✓ *Present findings at local and national meetings and conferences*

***Potential Responsibilities of the Program Manager***

- ✓ *Educate the outside evaluator about the program's operations and objectives, characteristics of the participant population, and the benefits that program staff expect from the evaluation. This may involve alerting evaluators to sensitive situations they may encounter during the course of their evaluation activities*
- ✓ *Provide feedback to the evaluator on whether instruments are appropriate for the target population and provide input during the evaluation plan phase*
- ✓ *Keep the outside evaluator informed about changes in the project's operations*
- ✓ *Specify information the evaluator should include in the report*
- ✓ *Assist in interpreting evaluation findings*
- ✓ *Provide information to all staff about the evaluation process*
- ✓ *Monitor the evaluation contract and completion of work products (such as reports)*
- ✓ *Ensure that program staff are fulfilling their responsibilities (such as data collection)*
- ✓ *Supervise in-house evaluation activities, such as completion of data collection instruments, and data entry*
- ✓ *Serve as a troubleshooter for the evaluation process, resolving problems or locating a higher level person in the agency who can help*
- ✓ *Request a debriefing from the evaluator at various times during the evaluation and at its conclusion*

***Elements of a Basic Contract***

- ✓ *Agency name and address*
- ✓ *Evaluator name, address, affiliation (if any), and social security number*
- ✓ *Person from agency responsible for monitoring the contract and work*
- ✓ *Key reports, products, and due dates*
- ✓ *Duties and responsibilities*
- ✓ *Required meetings, including attendance at staff meetings*
- ✓ *Payment amount, payment schedule, and requirements for payment (fees and expenses)*
- ✓ *Liability release*
- ✓ *Materials provided to the evaluator by the agency*
- ✓ *Any special terms or conditions, including those for terminating the contract*
- ✓ *Data ownership and publication rights*
- ✓ *Confidentiality of data*
- ✓ *Any restrictions on publishing evaluation result*
- ✓ *Signature and date for both agency representative and evaluator*

Chapter 4

# What Should You Include In An Evaluation Plan?

An evaluation plan is a written document that specifies the evaluation design and the practices and procedures you will use to conduct your evaluation. This chapter provides information about the necessary ingredients for your evaluation plan. This information will help you:

- Work with an experienced evaluator to develop the plan
- Develop a plan for your WIC Special Project Grant application
- Understand the kinds of things that are required in an evaluation and why a specific design or methodology was chosen
- Review the evaluation plan to make sure all components are included

A sample evaluation plan outline that may be used as a guide appears at the end of this chapter. The major sections of an evaluation plan, following the sample evaluation plan outline, are discussed below.

***Section 1: The evaluation framework.*** This section includes:

- The model for your project or initiative (discussed in Chapter 2)
- Project objectives
- Evaluation questions
- The time frame for the evaluation (when you will begin and end collection of evaluation information)

It should also include a discussion of the context for the evaluation, particularly aspects of your agency, program staff, or participants in the program that may affect the evaluation (also discussed in Chapter 2). If your evaluator is preparing the plan, the evaluator will need your help to prepare this section.

***Section 2: Evaluating project implementation—procedures and methods.*** This section should provide detailed descriptions of the practices and procedures that will be used to answer evaluation questions pertaining to your project implementation. This includes questions such as:

- ✓ *Are implementation objectives being attained?*
- ✓ *If not, why not?*
- ✓ *What barriers have been encountered?*
- ✓ *What facilitated attainment of your implementation objectives?*

For each objective or evaluation question, the evaluation plan must describe:

- Types of information needed
- Sources of information
- Criteria for selecting information sources
- Methods for collecting information (instruments and procedures)
- Time frame for collecting information
- Methods for analyzing information

A worksheet to help you list these items for each objective or question is found at the end of this chapter.

**Types of information needed.** In an evaluation, the information is often referred to as "data". Many people think that the term "data" refers only to numerical information. In fact, data can be facts, statistics, or any other items of information. Therefore, any information that is collected about your initiative, WIC participants, or the WIC program can be considered evaluation data.

The types of information needed will be guided by the project objectives you seek to assess and the evaluation questions you have developed. For example, when your objective concerns what you plan to do, you will need to collect information on:

- ✓ *The types of services, activities, or initiatives that are developed and implemented*
- ✓ *Who received services*
- ✓ *Service duration and intensity*

To illustrate, if you are using the Patient Flow Analysis (PFA) to determine clinic efficiency, you will need to develop objectives that relate to when you plan to run the PFA, how long it will operate, and which component of the PFA you plan to use.

When the objective pertains to who will do it, you will need to collect information on:

- ✓ *The characteristics of project staff (including their background and experience)*
- ✓ *How staff were recruited and hired*
- ✓ *Staff job descriptions*
- ✓ *Training staff received to perform their jobs*
- ✓ *The general staffing and administrative arrangements for the project*

When the objective concerns who will participate, you will need to collect information about:

- ✓ *Participants' characteristics*
- ✓ *Number of participants*
- ✓ *How participants were selected or recruited*
- ✓ *Factors that facilitated selection or recruitment*
- ✓ *Barriers encountered in the selection/recruitment process*

When the objective pertains to determining the cost of specific program components, you will need to collect information about:

- ✓ *The method you plan to use to collect cost data*
- ✓ *Who will collect these data*
- ✓ *When the data will be collected*

**Sources of necessary information.** This refers to where, or from whom, you will obtain evaluation information. Again, the selection of sources will be guided by the objective you are assessing. For example:

- Information on services can come from WIC records or from interviews with project staff or participants

- Information on staff may be obtained from program records and/or from interviews with local agency staff or clinic directors

- Information on participants can come from program records, your management information system, or interviews with participants, staff, and directors

- Information about barriers and facilitators to implementing the project or initiative can be obtained from interviews with relevant staff

- Information on costs can come from budgets, payroll records, management information systems, and other sources

This section of your plan should include a discussion of how you will maintain the confidentiality of information you obtain from your sources. In addition, you will need to develop consent forms that include a description of the evaluation objectives and how the information you collect from respondents will be used.

**Criteria for selecting information sources.** If your initiative has a large number of staff members and/or participants, you can reduce the time and cost of the evaluation by including only a sample of these as sources for evaluation information. If you decide to sample, you will need the assistance of an experienced evaluator to ensure that sampling procedures result in a group of participants or staff that will be appropriate for your evaluation objectives. Sampling is a complicated process, and if you do not sample correctly, you run the risk of not being able to generalize your evaluation results to your participant population (or staff) as a whole.

There are a variety of methods for sampling your sources.

- You can sample by identifying a specific time frame for collecting evaluation-related information and including only those staff or participants who participated during that time frame

- You can sample by randomly selecting the participants or staff to be used in the evaluation. For example, you might assign case numbers to participants and include only the even-numbered cases in your evaluation

- You can sample based on specific criteria, such as length of time with WIC (for staff), or characteristics of participants (age, household size, category, etc.)

For more information on sampling, please refer to the *WIC Evaluation Resource Guide.*

**Methods for collecting information.** For each implementation objective or question you are assessing, your evaluation plan must specify what information will be collected (the instruments and procedures) and who will collect it. To the extent possible, the collection of this information should be integrated into program operations. For example, running a PFA is typically integrated into clinic operations during the time it is in effect. Feedback forms or participant satisfaction questionnaires can easily be incorporated into operations as well.

There are a number of methods for collecting information including structured and open-ended interviews, paper and pencil inventories or questionnaires, observations, and systematic reviews of agency records or documents.

The methods you select will depend upon:

- ✓ *The data you need to answer your questions or establish that your objectives were attained*
- ✓ *Your sources*
- ✓ *Your available resources*

The instruments or forms that you plan to use to collect evaluation information should be developed or selected as you develop your evaluation plan. Select from existing questionnaires, or develop new ones; you need to identify all of the data collection instruments you plan to use before beginning your evaluation. Instrument development or selection often is a complex process and requires the assistance of your evaluator.

**Time frame for collecting information.** Although you will have already specified a general time frame for the evaluation, you will need to specify another time frame for collecting data relevant to each implementation objective or question. Times for data collection will again be guided by the objective being assessed or the question being answered. The time frame includes:

- ✓ *The frequency with which you will collect information (once, four times, etc.)*
- ✓ *What point in time you plan to collect the information (certification, every 3 months, at each voucher pickup, etc.)*

**Methods for analyzing information.** This section of your evaluation plan describes the practices and procedures you and your evaluator will use in analyzing the evaluation information. For assessing program implementation, the analyses will be primarily descriptive and may involve tabulating frequencies (of activities and participants) and classifying narrative information into meaningful categories, such as types of facilitating factors, types of barriers encountered, and strategies for overcoming barriers. An experienced evaluator can help your project team design an analysis plan that will maximize the benefits of the evaluation for the project and for WIC staff.

***Section III. Evaluating outcomes—procedures and methods.*** The practices and procedures for evaluating attainment of outcomes are similar to those for evaluating implementation objectives and questions. You need to:

- Determine the types of information needed
- Identify sources
- Specify criteria for selecting sources
- Identify the method you plan to use to collect information

- Determine the time frame for collecting it
- Designate the method you will use to analyze the information

Also, this part of your evaluation plan will need to address other issues.

**Selecting your evaluation design.** Your plan for evaluating outcomes should include a description of the evaluation design. The assistance of an experienced evaluator may be critical at this point.

The evaluation design should allow you to answer two questions about participants or your agency:

- Did participants demonstrate changes in knowledge, attitudes, behaviors, or awareness, or did organizational change occur?
- Were the changes the result of your WIC Special Project interventions?

If you plan to conduct a cost study, you should be able to answer the following question:

- What are the costs associated with our program and what is the impact (including benefits) of these costs?

Three commonly used evaluation designs are:

✓ *Pre- and post-intervention assessments*
✓ *Pre- and post-intervention assessments using a comparison group*
✓ *Pre- and post-intervention assessments using a control group*

> *In order to determine change, you need to collect **baseline information**. You collect baseline information at the beginning of your project, just prior to or at the onset of your project activities/interventions.*

A pre- and post-intervention design involves collecting information only on participants/the agency participating in the project or affected by your WIC Special Project. This information is collected at least twice—once before the initiative is implemented and then again, either immediately or some time after the initiative has ended. You can collect outcome information as often as you like after the initiative has been implemented, but you must collect information on participants/the agency prior to implementing the initiative. This is called ***baseline information*** and is essential for demonstrating that a change occurred.

If you are implementing an education or training program, this type of design can be effective for evaluating immediate changes. In these types of projects, you can assess WIC participant's or staff's knowledge and attitudes prior to the training and immediately after training with some degree of certainty that any changes observed resulted from your interventions. However, if you want to assess longer-term outcomes of training and education programs or any outcomes of service delivery programs, the pre- and post-intervention design by itself is not recommended. Collecting information only on your participants does not allow you to answer the question: Were participants' changes the result of your project's activities? The changes may have occurred as a result of other interventions or without any intervention at all.

To be able to attribute participant/agency changes to your project's intervention, you need to use a pre- and post-intervention design that incorporates a comparison or control group. In this design, two groups of individuals or agencies are included in your evaluation:

- The treatment group—participants/agencies who participate in your special project grant program

- The nontreatment group—participants/agencies who are similar to those in the treatment group, but who do not participate in your project during the time of the evaluation

The nontreatment group is called a ***control group*** if all eligible participants are ***randomly assigned*** to the treatment and nontreatment groups. Random assignment means that both groups can be considered similar with respect to all characteristics except project participation. Thus, potential sources of biases are "controlled."

Using a control group greatly strengthens your evaluation, but there are some difficulties in implementing this design option. Staff frequently view random assignment as unethical because it may deprive eligible participants of needed services/interventions. As a result, staff sometimes will prioritize eligible participants rather than use random assignment, or staff may simply refuse to assign individuals to the control group. In most cases however, the number of potentially eligible participants exceeds the number that can be served by the project/intervention. Therefore, selection of a control group is a matter of selecting individuals using random as opposed to judgmental methods.

To overcome staff resistance, educate clinic staff about the benefits of the random assignment process. No one would argue that it is important to provide services/interventions to individuals who need them. However, it is also important to find out if those services actually work. The random assignment process helps you determine whether or not your intervention is having the anticipated effect on participants. Staff also need to be made aware that random assignment does not mean that control group members cannot participate in any interventions. They may participate in the project after the evaluation data have been collected, or they may participate in other types of interventions or receive other types of services.

Another barrier to using a control group is the size of an intervention. If only a small number of participants are potentially affected, a control group design is not feasible.

A final barrier is the difficulty of enlisting control group members in the evaluation process when your evaluation requires interviews with, or questionnaires completed by, both treatment and control group members. Because control group members have not participated in the project, they are unlikely to have an interest in the evaluation and may refuse to be interviewed or complete a questionnaire. Some evaluation efforts set aside funds to pay, or otherwise provide an incentive for, both control group and treatment group members to participate in the evaluation. While there is some potential for bias in this situation, it is usually outweighed by the need to collect information from control group members.

*A **treatment group** is composed of a group of individuals or agencies receiving the services, products, or activities (interventions) that you are evaluating.*
*A **control group** is composed of randomly assigned individuals or agencies similar to your treatment group, except that they do not participate in your project or receive any project services.*
*A **comparison group** is composed of individuals or agencies that have similar characteristics to your treatment group. They do not receive any project services.*

If you are implementing a project in which random assignment of participants to treatment and control groups is not possible, you will need to identify a group of women and/or children who are similar to those participating in your project who you can assess as part of your evaluation. This group is called a ***comparison group***. Similar to a control group, members of a comparison group may receive other types of services or no services at all. Although using comparison groups means that programs do not have to deny services to eligible participants, you cannot be sure that the two groups are completely similar. You may have to statistically control for potential differences as part of your analyses.

Comparison group members may be participants in other programs provided by the health department or in programs offered by other agencies. If you plan to use a comparison group in your evaluation, you must make sure that this group will be available for assessments during the time frame of your evaluation. Also, be aware that comparison group members, like control group members, are difficult to enlist in an evaluation. In your evaluation plan, you will need to specify strategies for encouraging nontreatment group members to take part in the evaluation.

**Pretesting information collection instruments.** Your plans for pretesting and revising your information collection instruments are an important part of the evaluation effort. All data collection forms should be tested, or used on a trial basis, prior to using them for your evaluation. It is particularly important to pilot test any new forms you develop for your evaluation. A pretest will help you learn whether the forms give you the information you want, the questions and data items measure what it is you want to measure, the language and terms used in the forms are understood by everyone, and the length of time it will take to administer the form/collect the information. The pretest will help you fine tune your information collection instrument.

**Analyzing participant outcome information.** Your plan for evaluating outcomes should include a comprehensive data analysis plan. The analyses should be structured to answer the questions about whether change occurred and whether changes that occurred can be attributed to your program. Typically, outcome analyses are quantitative in nature and require the use of statistical methods.

***Section IV: Procedures for managing and monitoring the evaluation.*** This section of your evaluation plan is used to describe the practices and procedures you plan to use to manage the evaluation. If clinic staff are to be responsible for data collection, you will need to describe how they will be trained and monitored. You may want to develop a data collection manual that staff can use. This will ensure consistency in information collection and will be useful for staff who are hired after the evaluation begins.

***Section V: Dissemination of results.*** FCS requires that WIC Special Project Grant recipients disseminate the results of their efforts to the WIC community. Your plans to do so should be detailed in a section of your evaluation plan. What you plan to produce (e.g., a report), where and how you plan to distribute it as well as the method of dissemination (presentations at conferences, journal articles, etc.) should be discussed.

Your evaluation plan should also include a discussion of how you will handle any changes in program operations that may occur during the time the evaluation is being conducted. For example, some WIC agencies may be affected by agency reorganizations. If a particular program or agency component is discontinued or added during your WIC Special Project period, you will need to have procedures for documenting the time that this change occurred, the reasons for the change, and whether the grant participants or participating agencies were involved in the project prior to or after the change. This will help you determine whether the change had any impact on attainment of expected outcomes. ■

# Sample Evaluation Plan Outline

## *I. Evaluation Framework*

**A. What you are going to evaluate**

1. Grant priority area and program model (assumptions, interventions, short-term outcomes, intermediate outcomes, final outcomes, and goals)

2. Implementation objectives (stated in general and then measurable terms)

    a. What you plan to do and how

    b. Who will do it

    c. Who will participate, such as participant population, participating agencies, and recruitment strategies

3. Outcome objectives (stated in general and then measurable terms)

4. Context for the evaluation

**B. Questions to be addressed in the evaluation**

1. Are implementation objectives being attained? If not, why not (i.e., what barriers or problems have been encountered)? What kinds of things facilitated implementation?

2. Are outcome objectives being attained? If not, why not (i.e., what barriers or problems have been encountered)? What kinds of things facilitated attainment of outcomes?

    a. Do outcomes vary as a function of program features? (i.e., Which aspects of the program are most predictive of expected outcomes?)

    b. Do outcomes vary as a function of characteristics of the participants, staff, or agency?

3. All other evaluation questions

C. **The time frame for the evaluation**

1. When data collection will begin and end

2. How and why time frame was selected

## II. *Evaluating Program Implementation—Procedures and Methods*

A. **Objective or Question 1**

1. Type of information needed to answer question or determine if objective is being attained and to assess barriers and facilitators

2. Sources of information (i.e., WIC staff, WIC participants, program documents); plans for maintaining confidentiality of the information obtained during the evaluation

3. How sources of information were selected

4. Time frame for collecting information

5. Methods for collecting the information (i.e., interviews, paper and pencil instruments, observations, record reviews, etc.)

6. Methods for analyzing the information to answer the evaluation question or determine whether the objective was attained (i.e., tabulation of frequencies, assessment of relationships between or among variables)

B. **Repeat this information for each implementation objective or evaluation question being assessed in the evaluation**

## III. *Evaluating Outcomes—Procedures and Methods*

A. **Evaluation design (one of the following):**

1. Pre- and post-intervention design

2. Pre- and post-intervention design with comparison group

3. Pre- and post-intervention design with control group

**B. Objective or Question 1**

1. Types of information needed to answer question or determine if objective is being attained (i.e., what evidence will you use to demonstrate the change?)

2. Sources of information (i.e., WIC staff, WIC participants, etc.) and sampling plan, if relevant

3. How sources of information were selected

4. Time frame for collecting information

5. Methods of collecting information (e.g., questionnaires, observations, surveys, interviews) and plans for pretesting information collection methods

6. Methods for analyzing the information to answer the evaluation question or determine whether the objective was attained (i.e., tabulation of frequencies, assessment of relationships between or among variables using statistical tests)

**C. Repeat this information for each outcome objective or question being addressed in the outcome evaluation**

## *IV. Procedures for Managing and Monitoring the Evaluation*

**A. Procedures for training staff to collect evaluation-related information**

**B. Procedures for conducting quality control checks of the information collection process**

**C. Time lines for collecting, analyzing, and reporting information, including procedures for providing evaluation-related feedback to clinic directors and staff**

## *V. Dissemination of Results*

**A. Publications and reports**

**B. Presentations of results**

## Data Collection Matrix

| Research Question or Objective | Information Needed | Source of Information | Method of Obtaining Information | When Collected | Method of Analyzing Information |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
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